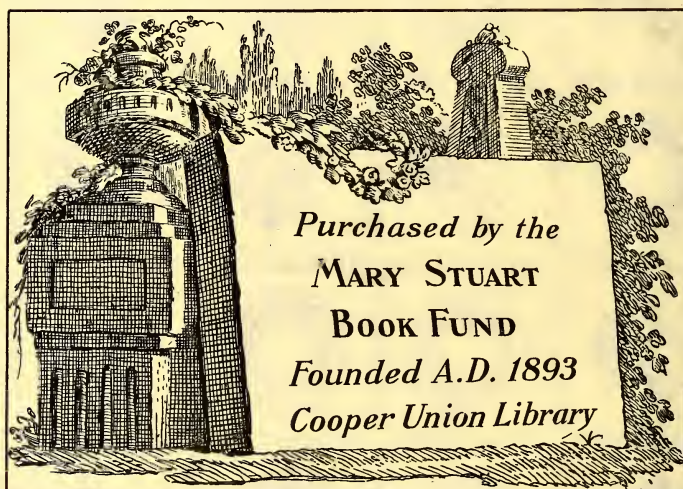


ROYAL SÈVRES CHINA



BY EGAN MEW





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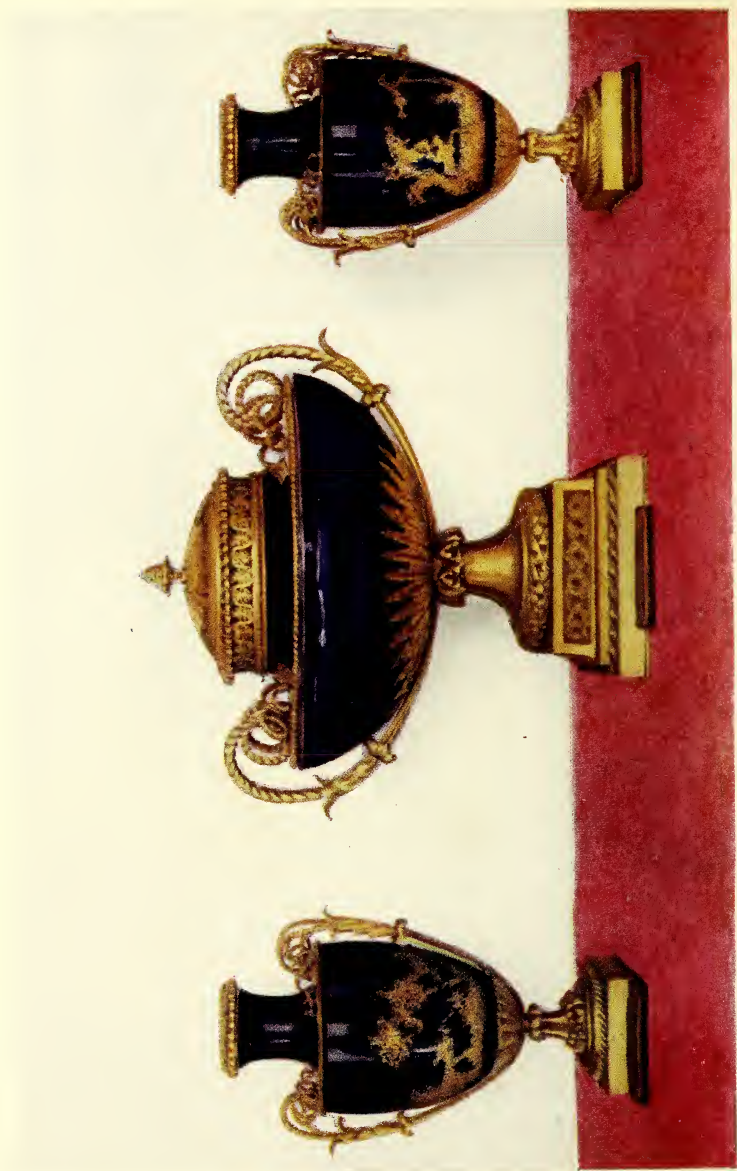
*Masterpieces of
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EDITED BY
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ROYAL SÈVRES CHINA

PLATE I.—THREE BLEU VASES WITH BRONZE
GILT MOUNTS. Frontispiece

The two smaller vases are of *bleu de roi* with fine decoration in plain gold painted directly on the blue ground. The designs show the *singeries* then in fashion, monkeys engaged in various sports with goats and so forth. The bronze mounts of these two pieces are a very effective addition to the brilliant blue vases. The example in the middle is of plain *gros bleu*, and with its well-designed Louis Seize mounts is an uncommon and beautiful specimen of "all blue" Sèvres.



ROYAL SÈVRES CHINA

BY
EGAN MEW



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The illustrations here used are specially taken from objects at the Wallace Gallery and from the Collection of H. C. ERHARDT, Esq.

DATA OF THE ROYAL SÈVRES

- 1740.—The brothers Dubois, somewhat unreliable workmen of the Chantilly manufactory, arranged to work their secrets in regard to paste, glaze, and clay under M. Orry de Fulvi at the Château de Vincennes. A few years later an intelligent workman, Gravant, obtained their secrets and took their place.
- 1748.—Bachelier began his work as Art Director. Louis XV. was now making donations to the works.
- 1749.—The *Bleu de Roi* made its appearance.
- 1752.—The chemist Hellot introduced the *Bleu turquin*.
- 1753.—An important year. The King allowed the works to be called a Royal Factory, and gave the use of the double Ls mark, and the date letter was first

employed. Thus  is the mark for 1753.

- 1756.—Manufactory removed, under the guidance of the Marquise de Pompadour, to Sèvres, on the road between Versailles and Paris.
- 1757.—Xhrowet discovered the fine *jaune jonquille*, apple-green, and the rose Pompadour colours. In England the last colour is usually called rose Du Barry.
- 1759.—The King caused the shareholders' money to be returned to them, and the factory was administered by a Councillor of State, with Boileau as general director.

1766.—The privileges of the Royal Factory were enforced to the exclusion of others.

1768.—The first example of hard or real porcelain was produced at Sèvres; the soft paste was continued until the end of the eighteenth century.

1789.—The manufactory was at its zenith as regards popularity, but its earlier productions were even more interesting.

1790.—Approaching end of the "Royal" period.

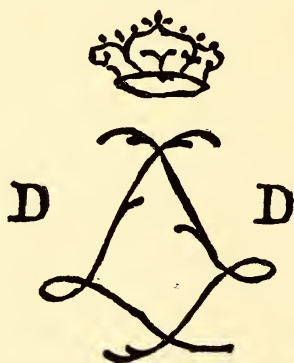


PLATE II.—MOUNTED VASE AS CANDELABRUM

This is a fine example of the apple-green ground now so much admired. Like most specimens of this *vert jaune* in the Louis Quinze period, the green is softened by a small pattern or network of gold covering the entire surface, except of course the reserves, which are delicately painted with birds of brilliant plumage. The elaborate ormolu mounts are characteristic of the late 'sixties of the eighteenth century, when this piece was doubtless produced.



ROYAL SÈVRES CHINA

CHAPTER I

THE qualifying adjective "Royal" indicates the eighteenth-century period dealt with here. The title dates from 1753 to 1793, and includes the most brilliant years of the Versailles régime and the cultivated rule of the Pompadour. Later, under the first Republic, then under Napoleon, and afterwards when the Restoration took place, the manufactory still continued. Even now, when all is mechanism and technical perfection, the porcelains of Sèvres still pour upon the world from the works which have been the envy and admiration of Europe since the first days of Vincennes—the original home of these productions. As early as 1745, Vincennes supplied soft paste china flowers, in natural colours, with the view of adding to the beauty of the mounted hard paste objects of the Meissen (or Dresden)

factory, and the examples of Oriental porcelain, then greatly collected.

Strange to say, France, *par excellence* the child of Rome and heritor of all the arts, was by no means forward in the production of pottery during the Renaissance. However, where Italy led, the country of Francis I. was sure to follow; but the progress in this case was slow, and the early faïence of France, Palissy and Henri II. ware excepted, was mainly an echo of Gerolamo della Robbia and the manufactures of Urbino in their decline. But with the seventeenth century the faïence makers in France were well to the front among the many European experimentalists who sought to reproduce the mysterious Chinese porcelain which had already found its way to the West a few centuries earlier, and they were then among the most successful. The porcelain they made was in reality entirely different from its Oriental model, being compounded of glass, chalk, and clay in place of the natural kaolin and felspathic ingredients of the original wares. This difficult and costly manufacture required the support of interested patrons; it was not in any sense a commercial product. Of course the later

PLATE III.—VASE JARDINIÈRE IN BLUE AND GREEN

These vase-shaped flower-stands are very charmingly designed and coloured. In the originals the ground is of *bleu du roi* with decorations in a fine apple-green. The blue, as is usual in all Sèvres, is covered with a slight network or marbling of gold. Between the stand and the upper part four small openings appear on each vase for flowers, three are outlined with green and gold. The finely painted Oriental bids are by Le Doux, and the date letter is for the year 1758, one of the most interesting of the early period of the style Louis Quinze.



ROYAL SÈVRES 19

seventeenth and eighteenth century victories with the faïence of Rouen, and the soft and hard porcelains of Royal Sèvres, more than compensated for the slow growth of this manufacture in a country so often first in the arts.

THE VOGUE OF SÈVRES

Sèvres holds probably the highest place among all ceramics in the popular mind. Oriental productions are for those with a sense of fine art; Meissen, or Dresden as it is called, is well known but not greatly understood; but the very name of Sèvres calls to the vision of the man in the street the porcelain of princes, the last word of gorgeous decoration, vivid colouring, luxury, and display. As a matter of fact, Sèvres contains two large subjects within its name—the *pâte tendre* and the hard paste. The first was used with admirable effect for many years, but about 1768 the making of hard paste, such as that of China or of Meissen, was introduced. The two kinds of porcelain were then made side by side until the end of the eighteenth century, when the attractive and

characteristic soft-paste productions ceased altogether to be manufactured.

ARCANIST'S SECRETS

The early history of the famous establishment is based upon its more or less accidental absorption of other people's secrets. Early in the eighteenth century there were plenty of somewhat unscrupulous arcanists of various potteries going about Europe, with remarkable recipes for the making of china wares which they were prepared to sell.

The invention of the particular soft paste produced at St. Cloud was the basis of Sèvres. First the secret was carried to Chantilly, and then offered to a student of the subject, M. Orry de Fulvi, Intendant of Finance, and a man with important connections near the King. By aid of the influence of his brother with Louis XV., de Fulvi established the sellers of secrets, the brothers Dubois, in the riding-school of the old Château at Vincennes, which was perhaps already falling somewhat into disrepair. The Dubois were, it appears, doubtful characters,

and anything but plain-dealers. They failed to carry out their contracts with M. de Fulvi, and were careless of their "secrets." Gravant, an industrious apprentice or workman at the factory, possessed himself of their information, and it seems sold it out and out to the Controller of Finance. In 1741 the Dubois retired with all the dishonours of failure from Vincennes, and Charles Adam was appointed, by the more important people deeply interested in the undertaking, to form a company, and, under a privilege granted by the King, continue the manufacture of porcelain after what was considered to be the style of Meissen—with the aid of the useful Gravant.

Sir Wollaston Franks says that in 1753 the King of France became the owner of a third, and the factory became "Manufacture Royale de Porcelaine de France."

FROM VINCENNES TO SÈVRES

In 1756, for want of space, the works were transferred to Sèvres, and in 1759 the King became sole owner.

The mark, from the beginning, was the royal

cypher, the double

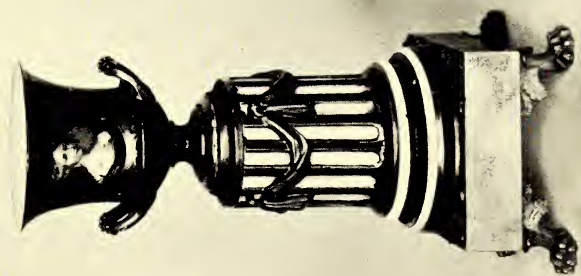


In 1753 a letter was

first employed to denote the year, commencing with A and ending in 1777 with Z. Then a double letter AA began in 1778, ending in 1793. Soon after the royal cypher was replaced by R. F. (République Française), with various signs up to 1817. From 1804 to 1809 a stencilled mark was in use, "M. Imp^{le} de Sèvres," and subsequently other marks, according to the changes of government. One of the peculiarities of the Sèvres marks is that signs or initials were commonly employed to indicate the names of the painters and gilders, tables of which are given in most books on the subject, and will be found in a convenient form farther on in this volume. Whatever one's personal opinion may be of the æsthetic value of some of the so-called finest productions of Vincennes-Sèvres, there can be no doubt that the vogue and prestige which the royal interest created in the eighteenth century, and which, after a hiatus of depression, was continued by Brongniart under Napoleon,

PLATE IV.—A BLEU DE ROI BUTTER-DISH,
AND VASES

The deep blue of the ground of dish and cover is decorated and toned by an elaborate design in gold, as is usual when this colour is used. The various patterns employed were usually either delicate network, or the *vermicelle* or the *œil-de-perdrix*, all of which soften the somewhat strident colour of the famous Sèvres blue to a more gentle tone. The shape of this butter-dish was popular with the china makers for a long while, but the actual date of production is in the 'sixties of the eighteenth century, when the use of small ropes and wreaths of bright flowers was becoming the vogue. The vases are of later date.



still exists. The "dainty rogues" in French porcelain are as much worshipped at the present time as in those outwardly brave days when the cultured and artistically inspired Pompadour patronised the craftsmen of Sèvres, or a little later, when "Courtiers as butterflies bright, beauties that Fragonard drew," vied with each other under the Du Barry in the possession of the most highly decorated examples of native workmanship. Although M. Auscher, so long *chef de fabrication* at Sèvres, does not think it too much to say that 90 per cent. of the so-called soft-paste porcelain of that fabrique to be found in collections to-day is not of genuine Sèvres decoration, and although a thousand frauds have been perpetrated in that name, the cult increases with the passage of time, and prices higher and still higher are paid each year.

CHAPTER II

THE products of Vincennes and Sèvres have always been the porcelains of the great ones of the earth. The factories made no attempt to cater for the people. Owing largely to the shortage of gold and silver, kings sent gifts of Sèvres to ambassadors in such circumstances as those in which precious metal would previously have been used. Empresses ordered services—for example, that of the Empress Catherine II. of Russia, consisting of 744 pieces, took three years to produce, and cost £13,250. The lords and ladies of the courts of Europe amused themselves with the ornaments and delightful toys which came from the skilful studios of the Royal Factory. Society “collected” as much then as now. The prices that are paid to-day are truly enormous, but they are very little greater than the original cost. Big sums were given for fine examples, and the losses of the various com-

panies that produced the porcelains must be counted in the cost price of old Sèvres.

In the first period at Vincennes soft paste was made from 1740 to 1756. The earlier years showed a close imitation of Chinese and Japanese designs and shapes. Personally I admire these, but it is generally thought that the later development of this first period, on what may be called European or Meissen lines, is more excellent.

EUROPEAN STYLES

Thus when the Chinese and Japanese styles had become stale, the taste for decoration turned towards Western ideals. Wreaths and garlands of flowers were painted, and those curious and beautiful exotic birds which had been fashionable in France from the time when Diane de Poitiers kept her magnificent heronry and flocks of rare birds at Anet. These creatures of brilliant plumage were in vogue as a decoration for porcelain up to about 1760, or in some cases later. Flowers in relief were of course a strong suite with the factory, and those models of

blossoms in bouquets and so forth, which are preserved in the European museums, are of this period. Among the most historical of such pieces is the gift made by the Dauphine Marie-Joseph of Saxony in 1749, to her father the King of Saxony—the parent state of this kind of work. Then there are the examples that the Pompadour offered Louis XV., and the thousand and one decorations in this style that the King ordered for himself. About this time, too, the painting of subjects in the style of Boucher, and other delightfully cunning masters, was greatly fashionable. Bleu de Roi, one of the important victories of old Sèvres, the deep under-glaze cobalt-blue, was first used in 1749. The now admired turquoise-blue, an enamel colour placed over the glaze, dates from 1752.

THE ROYAL INTEREST

In 1753 the King virtually gave Vincennes a monopoly of porcelain productions. Although the interlacing Ls were then officially permitted to it as mark, they had been used from the beginning without probably any distinct authority. As it has been pointed out, it was in the year

PLATE V.—INKSTAND OF TURQUOISE-BLUE AND
ORMOLU

This piece, which is about 3 inches high and 5 inches long, is of a pleasing shape, colour, and decoration by no means general at Sèvres. The ormolu is well designed to heighten the effect of the pieces. It is fitted with inkpot and pounce box or *sandarque* complete. The mark is simply the double Ls without date letter, and the ware is the early soft paste with fine decoration in the heavy old gold characteristic of the best period.



1753 that the important introduction of a date letter was made. A, B, and C stood for the last three years of Vincennes production. In 1756 the works outgrew the old Château, and were transplanted to Sèvres, which lies conveniently between Versailles and Paris. Thus the first date letter at Sèvres is the "D." The move caused little or no change in the craft or colours. There was certainly no reason for any alteration; the soft-paste tints indeed must have been of remarkable range at Vincennes to have produced such vast quantities of flowers in their natural colours, and it was not until hard paste was used that new ingredients and colours had to be introduced.

The second period of Sèvres may be taken to be from 1756 to 1779. There had been struggles for eighteen years, and there were difficulties ahead. But now the King found the money; paid off debts and ordered an annual subsidy of 96,000 livres. Some writers think that the next ten years give the most glorious production of soft-paste Sèvres porcelains. To judge of these, one should be familiar with the King's collection at Windsor and Buckingham

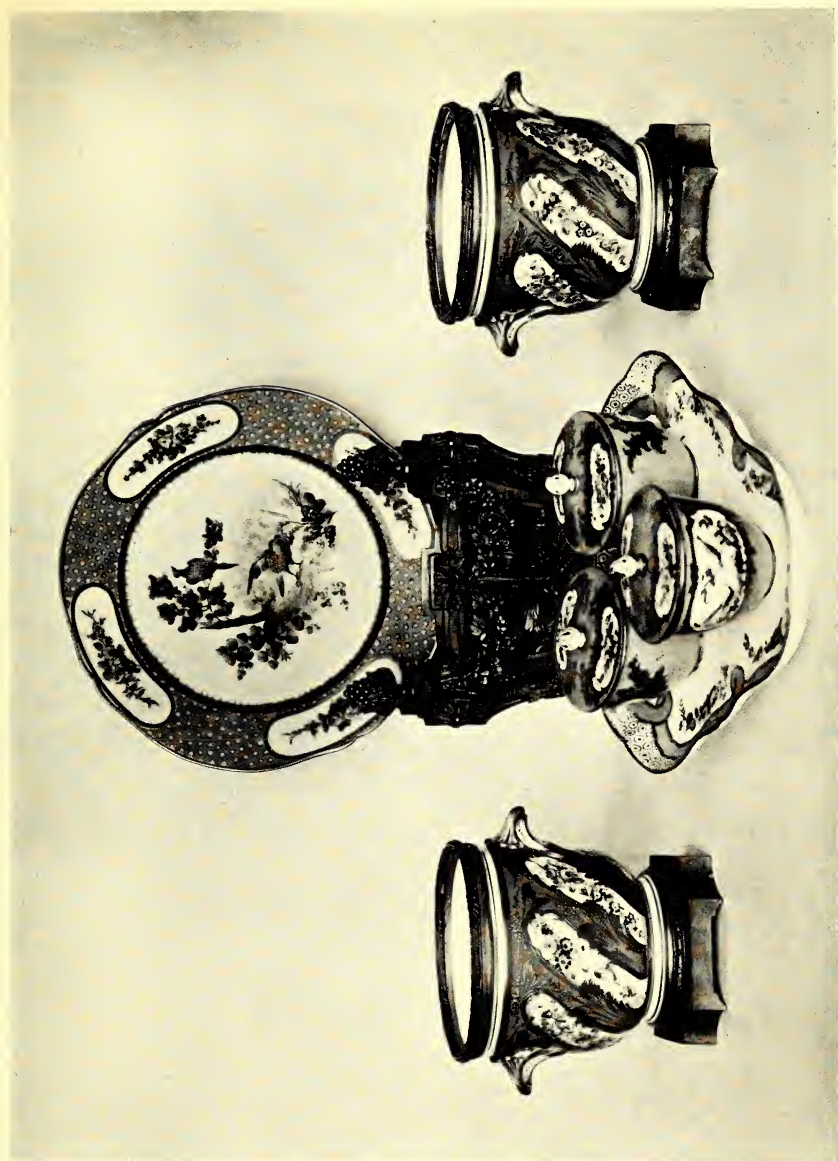
Palace, the collections of the Rothschild family, and the specimens at Hertford House, the examples at Sèvres, and in the "Jones" and "Franks" collections. These various museums and cabinets will show the enormous quantity of examples made, and the vast variety of styles, and forms, and colours. The affairs of the monopoly were now carried with a high hand, and all other manufacturers of porcelain suffered—among these the Hannongs. This family was producing hard porcelain at Strasburg possibly as early as 1726, but when it became a French town they found their manufacture was contraband. Later the Hannongs had to sell their secrets of hard paste to Sèvres, but owing to the kaolin, which is necessary for hard paste, not having been found in France, and on account of certain intrigues, this sale of the secret appears to have failed. However, in 1768 kaolin was discovered in France.

THE FINDING OF CHINA CLAY

This was the result of a confused and somewhat romantic series of adventures. The story

PLATE VI.—PLATE, TOILET PIECES, AND
FLOWER-POTS

The little tray, with three covered vessels for powder and cosmetique, is of an unusual form, in that the cups, generally movable, are attached to the tray in this case. The design is very delicate and charming, with the birds and groups of flowers so much in vogue in early Sèvres. The plate above shows the same design, with the *œil-de-perdrix* border, and is dated 1772. The small jardinières are very brilliant with gold work and delicate painted flowers; they are marked with the date letter of 1755, and mounted at a somewhat later date on finely chased ormolu.



is told in many ways in the various books on the subject, but the main point is that Millot, the principal chemist at Sèvres under the directorship of Macquer and the management of Boileau, who was considered rather cunning in the matter, instituted a search for the kaolin under the guidance of the Archbishop of Bordeaux. After various traffics and discoveries, Millot and Macquer acquired about four hundred pounds of the right clay from the estate of a Madame de Montait at St. Yreix in Périgord. Arrangements were soon made with the owner of this kaolin when it was found that experiments with it had succeeded. As I have said, this was in 1768, and soon after the reign of hard-paste porcelain began at Sèvres.

OLD PÂTE TENDRE

The beauty of colour and glaze on soft paste is greater than that on hard, especially when the colour was powdered on and melted, rather than brushed on as in the earliest days. It was this brilliant soft colouring which has made Sèvres *pâte tendre* the *porcelaine de luxe* of kings and princes. Efforts have been

made to reproduce the old soft pastes, but the results have not been encouraging, and the cost was always extremely heavy. After the passing of the Pompadour in 1764, and the introduction of hard paste about 1770, the beauty of Sèvres porcelain lost some of its youth and began to decline; but the old manner lasted for some time, and it was not until 1779 that the third period, lasting up to 1792, can be said to have begun. Mismanagement had recently played havoc with both the men and works of Sèvres, but from 1779 some remarkable examples of both hard and soft paste were produced. Towards the close of this, the last period of the Royal Factory, financial difficulties arose; but Louis XVI., still clinging to family tradition, supported it—until no one would support him. The years from 1792 to 1810 are of course under the Republican régime, and do not belong to the Royal time. Brongniart was appointed in 1800, and revived the fallen fortunes of Sèvres. He remained on until 1847, and outlived the interesting Napoleonic days as well as those of many other rulers. But these were the days of comparatively poor design, and the glories of

Sèvres had departed. "It may be accepted as a safe rule," says a recent writer, "that nothing that was made at Sèvres, or, indeed, at any porcelain factory, after 1810, has any value as a work of art to a connoisseur." I do not entirely agree with this statement, but I fear it is true of Sèvres, in the æsthetic sense.

CHAPTER III

ALTHOUGH some of the most delightful work in *pâte tendre* was done in the very early days at Vincennes, it was after Madame de Pompadour took porcelain more completely under her protection that the great European vogue for these wares flourished. The life of the factory began before, and will end long after, the reign of the most famous of the eighteenth-century favourites, but its brilliant period synchronised with her own. As is shown, Louis XV. was himself greatly interested in the work of this factory—and in other arts and crafts—but one knows whence came the initiative in this case.

THE WONDERFUL MARQUISE

It has been said of Madame de Pompadour that her sponsors were the Muse of Song and the Muse of Smiles, to which may very justly

PLATE VII.—BOWL, COVER, AND STAND

The two-handled écuelle in various forms is one of the most graceful of the more utilitarian examples of Sèvres work. This example is by Vieillard, with date below of 1763. The body is painted with bleu du roi, which, as usual, has its brilliancy toned by a network of gold decoration. The reserves or cartels are ornamented with pictures of children in gay landscapes and groups of garden trophies treated in the decorative manner of the period.



be added such muses as there be of the arts of decoration. Her tastes and her ambitions led her in the direction of the applied arts. She loved everything about her to be beautiful, and her ambition was to live in the minds of future generations not as the mistress of Louis XV.'s pleasures, but as the creator of artistic schools, the patron of a splendid period made perfect by her guidance and care. One of the most important results of this passionate desire for the praises of posterity is to be found in her enthusiasm for the productions of Sèvres. It is true that she had some financial interest in the site and buildings, and that she pushed the fortunes of the porcelains to her own advantage. But, then, one accepts such egoism gladly when the results are so magnificent. Her first desire was to lure from Saxony all the buyers of Dresden, and to replace such wares with those of French manufacture. To rival, and perhaps ruin, Meissen became her *idée fixe*. At first the various people she employed, directly or indirectly, were not entirely successful at Mennecey-Villeroy, Chantilly, and elsewhere—in spite of the earth brought from Saxony

and the secrets learnt from Comte d'Hoyon. But later her victories were complete, although she died before the hard paste she sought had been brought to light.

Quoting to some extent from Brongniart's "Histoire de la Porcelaine," M. de Goncourt says, in effect, that it was only the enthusiasm of the Marquise which installed the factory in the vast premises still standing at Sèvres. At the present time the old building is a school for young ladies. The works were rebuilt some forty years ago.

There were gloomy forebodings from the Marquis d'Argenson and many others when the factories were first started. But the energetic Pompadour called in new chemists and artists, and urged them to those experiments with the various clays of France which ultimately led to the discovery of the kaolin of St. Yreix. A whole army of skilled workmen, painters of flowers and landscapes, and sculptors, was put at the disposal of the head of the studios, Bachelier. The Marquise had Sèvres proclaimed a Royal Factory like the Savonnerie and the Gobelins, and the King, as I have said, took a

third share in the enterprise. The Pompadour frequently visited the factory, and helped forward with her superintendence, her interest, her admirable taste, and the inspiration of her fancy, that frail and wonderful ware which was to become one of the monuments of her fame, and outlive, by how many years, the then powerful monarchy. For long she continued to protect the establishment, and to encourage the artists and bespeak the interest and enthusiasm of the King.

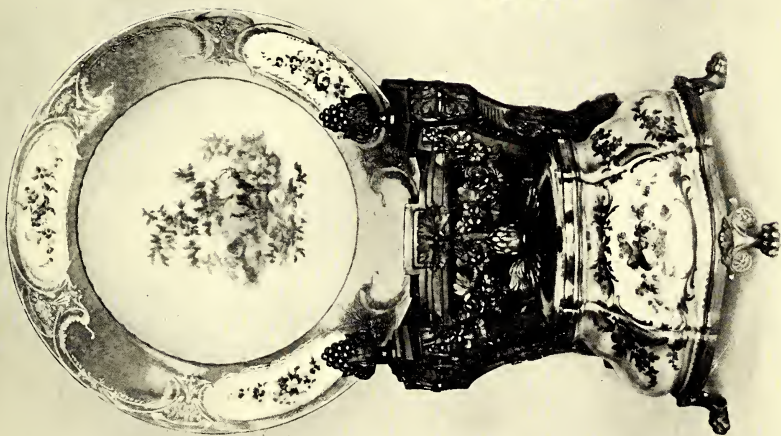
The Sèvres wares were exhibited in the Château of Versailles, and her taste, an expensive one, was forced upon the whole Court. One of her well-known sayings in this connection was, "Not to buy this china, so long as one has any money, is to prove oneself a bad citizen." Although the Pompadour was hated both by the Church and by the Parliamentarians, she was accepted as the arbitress of elegance at the moment; and to her is the honour of the great days of Sèvres—to the Marquise and to the army of gifted artists and sculptors whose labours so admirably supported her bursts of fantasy and flights of bold ambition.

THE VINCENNES PARTERRE

From the memoirs of that bitter enemy of the Pompadour, the Marquis d'Argenson, comes the oft-told tale of one of the many little stratagems by which she retained so long the brittle favour of her King. At her small Château of Bellevue, where everything was perfect—except man, perhaps—the favourite once thought of adding to the palace of enchantment, and at the same time interesting the King more closely in her scheme of the porcelain works, by forming a garden of spring and summer flowers in mid-winter. A prodigious glass house or in-door garden was arranged, and the flowers, naturalistic to the last degree, were scented each with its proper perfume. The King went forward to pluck his favourite blossom, and lo! he sees the flower-bed is formed of French porcelains. No doubt this little *ruse* cost the taxpayer a pretty penny, but it established the fortune of the factory. The King spent 800,000 livres on Vincennes porcelain flowers in one order, and his Court,

**PLATE VIII.—AN EARLY INKSTAND, TWO VASES,
AND A PLATE**

All these pieces are admirable specimens of the delicate and brilliant work done in the last days of the reign of the Marquise de Pompadour. The decoration is at once lavish and tasteful, and the rich mountings are obviously designed at the same time as the soft-paste porcelain, and intended to heighten and enrich the already brilliant surfaces. Such pieces as these show the royal character of the work of Sèvres to great advantage, but one is convinced that it is a porcelain for princes only.



one may be sure, was not slow to follow suit.

The brother of the Pompadour, the Marquis de Vandières, later de Marigny, was made by her the director of buildings, gardens, arts, and manufactures. As fortune would have it, he was immensely gifted for the post, and it is greatly owing to him that the arrangement of apartments, their architecture and decoration, was so complete and perfect in his period. This corner of government was conducted on lines of generosity, sympathy, and tact. Quesnay said of him that no one save Colbert had done so much in his place, and that he was perfectly honest. He was a favourite with the King, and undoubtedly his sense of style and rare taste did much for the early days of Sèvres. The Marquis is forgotten; but the result of his artistic zeal lasts through the centuries.

CHAPTER IV

IT is said that the early faïence-makers of France gave the name of "biscuit" to their paste or material when it was not glazed, and that is the name also of the uncoloured and unglazed ware of Sèvres. It is, I think, the most delightful department of this factory's work.

About 1749 the then director of the studios, Bachelier, was faced with many difficulties in regard to the glazing and colouring the small figures at that time greatly in vogue. He then made the bold yet simple suggestion that the modelled figure or sculpture should be produced in the "biscuit" state without colouring or glaze. By this means the work of the modellers—a race of refined and spirited and delicate artists, as it chanced—appeared unblurred by the thickness of the glaze and uncomplicated by the pigments used in colouring.

PLATE IX.—CABARET OF APPLE-GREEN

This little tea service for two was one of many made about 1765-1770, and decorated by the gifted portrait painter and miniaturist Asselin. The cartels contain the little pictures of children at play for which this artist was famous. The whole design is enriched with festoons of gilt leaves, which admirably blend with the fine green of the ground.



THE "BISCUITS" OF THE SECOND HALF
OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In private collections and the museums here and abroad are many pieces which show how admirable was this work. For the first twenty years or so, these groups and figures were made in soft-paste porcelain and only fired once. Later, in 1769, the so-called biscuit pieces of Sèvres were carried out in hard paste. Late in the history of Sèvres, some statuary was also produced in a specially composed paste, originally intended for a life-sized figure of Louis XVI. The charming statue of "La Baigneuse," which is 2 feet 2½ inches in height, by the accomplished Falconet, is of this material. The figure, with its companion "La Baigneuse aux Roseaux," has been debased almost beyond recognition by small and poor copies; but the first example made Falconet famous and brought him within the Academy of Fine Arts. Among the many other admired sculptors who worked for Sèvres are the well-known names of Bouchardon, La Riche—with a special faculty for obtaining an excellent likeness, Pigalle, Clodion,

La Rue, Boizot, Caffieri, Leclerre, Houdon, and the accomplished Pajou, whose famous figures of Madame Du Barry are full of gaiety and verve, and instinct with the grace and spirit of the period. In connection with the marks on Sèvres biscuit, Mr. Wylde, in his "Continental Porcelain," from which pleasing work I have quoted several times, gives an excellent warning. "It should be particularly noted," he writes, "that the double Ls, as used on glazed vessels, were never employed on biscuit figures, but that they usually bore the initials or mark of the sculptor. It may be safely stated that all biscuit figures marked with the double Ls of Sèvres are nothing better than modern forgeries."

Strangely enough, it does not appear that any bust or figure of Madame de Pompadour was produced in biscuit, but some other famous personages can be collected in this particular material. There is a fine bust, for example, of Louis XV.; both Pajou, who had in 1772 made a group of the marriage, and Boizot, modelled busts of Marie Antoinette at different periods. The latter artist also made one of Louis XVI. The royal children were

not forgotten. Molière, Corneille, Racine, Voltaire, Franklin, Condé, Vauban, Frederick the Great, Joseph II., down to Diderot and Rousseau, were among the not very numerous well-known personages whose portrait models were produced.

In all these biscuit pieces no effort has been made to obtain a gorgeous effect, and thus some of the most agreeable ceramic work that Europe has produced may be found in this department.

EXCESSIVE EFFORTS

The "biscuit" work is a fortunate exception to the general style of later Sèvres, for it must be owned that, as a whole, the grandest efforts of French porcelain are often spoilt by a lack of the artistic spirit, an over-elaboration, a vast display, and a crowding of detail, that rob them of the highest place among decorated ceramics.

Of course there is a large and powerful class of connoisseur that does not agree with my point of view. A man of this more general mood has been typified by Mr. Austin Dobson

in some pleasant verses of his, which describe two friends, who, having accomplished the feast "not full but fitting," are discussing the treasures of the host—some highly decorated figures—

"Then I produce my Prize, in truth :—
Six groups in *Sèvres*, fresh as youth
And rare as Love. You pause, you wonder.
(Pretend to doubt the marks forsooth !)

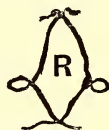
And so we fall to why and how
The fragile figures smile and bow ;
Divine, at length, the fable under."

There are many hand-books to tell the "why and how" to many an amateur collector who is inclined to doubt those marks which have provided so prolific and remunerative a field for the subtle forger and trickster of accomplishment.

PLATE X.—TWO CREAM-JUGS

These are admirable examples of the delicate apple-green ground in use about 1770. The green is overlaid with a sort of marbling of fine gold. The scroll work in gilt within the mouths of the jugs is finely applied, and the usual exotic birds are treated in the con-

vention of a slightly earlier period. The mark is only the



without the decorator's sign or initial, but these jugs are unusually good soft-paste pieces.





CHAPTER V

SÈVRES has one great charm for the collector which is denied, in various degrees, to other eighteenth-century porcelains. The best examples of this china are marked clearly from nearly the beginning even until to-day. At first, at Vincennes, the interlaced Ls appear to have been used without authority, but from 1753 that mark became official. At that date and after, the letters of the alphabet were employed to mark the year, as has been said. This single

letter was used in conjunction with the



from 1753 to 1777, when the Z of the French alphabet had been reached. It was supposed at one time that the J was not used in 1762, but authorities now agree that it took its right place. At one time, too, the comet of the year 1769 was thought to have taken the place of the R, but I believe most students of the subject have

seen original pieces marked with that letter. It may be noted that owing to the use of J in the year 1762 having been established, the comet would not have fallen upon the R year, but upon that of Q. In 1778 double letters, such as AA, took the place of single, and continued up to 17th July 1793, which ended the series of the Royal and best days of Sèvres.

THE DECORATORS' MARKS






















During these years the decorators and gilders used their marks and names on most pieces of importance or artistic merit. Of these highly useful signs and initials a list follows. With these marks, in conjunction with the date letters and the double Ls, Sèvres is almost as well authenticated as gold and silver plate. Unfortunately forgeries and frauds are much easier with Sèvres than silver, but the would-be imitator frequently becomes involved in the history of his subject and makes detection easy.


The drawings on page 59 show the principal marks in use from 1750 onwards until the end of the Royal periods.

Marks and Monograms of The Painters, Decorators and Gilders and Date Letters

VINCENNES-SÈVRES

1753-1800



	Aloncle(François), b. 1734, painter of birds and animals, worked 1758-1781		Barrat, garlands and bouquets, 1780-1791		Boucher, b. 1725, entered 1754 ; flower maker and garlands
	Antheaume (Jean Jacques), b. 1727, painter of land- scapes and animals, entered 1754		Baudoin, b. 1724, ornament,borders, gilder of the second class, entered 1750		Boucher, or Bouchet (Jean), b. 1720, worked 1757-1793 ; painter and gilder
	Asselin, portraits and miniatures ; entered in 1764, d. 1803		Becquet, b. 1714, painter of flowers, entered 1748		Bouillat, painter of flowers and landscapes, 1800-1811
	Aubert (senior), entered in 1754, painter of flowers		Bertrand, painter of detached bouquets, 1750-1800		Boulanger, entered 1779, painter of detached bouquets. In 1785 became painter in gold of the first class
	Bailly (junior), b. 1720, painter and chemist ; entered in 1745, left about 1793		Bienfait (J. B.), b. 1735, painter and gilder, 1756-1759		Boulanger (son), painter of flowers, pastoral subjects, and children, 1770-1781
	Bardet, b. 1732, painter of flowers, worked 1751-1800		Binet, b. 1731, painter of flowers, detached bou- quets, 1750-1800		Bouillon, entered in 1763 ; detached bouquets, 1745-1792
	Barre, painter of detached bouquets, 1780-1791		Binet (Mdma), flower maker, 1750-1800		Bunel (Mdma), née Manon Buteux, painter of flowers, 1778-1817



















	Buteux (senior), b. 1721, flowers and emblems, 1756-1786	<i>Cj</i>	Chapuis (the younger), painter of detached bouquets before 1800		Dubois (Jean René), working at fifteen years old in 1756, left in 1757
<i>g.</i>	Buteux (elder son, Théodore), flower painter, 1773-1822		Chauvaux (senior), b. 1731, entered in 1752; gilder	<i>D</i>	Dusolle, working before 1800; detached bouquets
	Buteux (junior, Guillaume), entered 1780-1794; painter and gilder; pastoral subjects and children	<i>jn</i>	Chauvaux (junior), entered in 1713; detached bouquets and gilding	<i>D.T</i>	Dutanda, entered 1773; flowers and garlands
	Capelle (M ^d me), b. 1722, entered 1749; painter of flowers and friezes		Chevallier (Pierre François), Hugong, called, b. 1729, entered 1755; flowers and bouquets		Evans, b. 1733, entered in 1752; painter of birds in 1780; landscapes, birds, and animals in 1793
	Cardin, entered in 1749, chief of the painters in 1793		De Choisy (Julien Hural de), b. 1748, entered 1770; painter of flowers and arabesques	<i>F</i>	Falot, or Fallot, entered in 1764; painter, gilder, birds and Chinese figures
<i>5</i>	Carrier, or Carrié, b. 1734, entered in 1752		Chulot, b. 1725, entered in 1755; painter of attri- butes and trophies		Fontaine, b. 1730, entered 1752; painter of flowers and gilder
<i>C.</i>	Castel, entered in 1771; painter of animals and land- scapes, and in 1793 gilder, 1750-1800	<i>C.m</i>	Commelin, entered in 1765; painter of detached bouquets garlands and flowers		Fontelliau, entered 1753; gilder
	Caton, b. 1727, entered in 1747; painter of pastoral subjects, children, and portraits	<i>J</i>	Cornaille (Antoine Joussaint), b. 1734, entered 1755; painter of flowers and detached bouquets	<i>Y</i>	Fouré, flowers, bouquets, etc., before 1800
	Cratice, painter of flowers and detached bouquets before 1800	<i>C</i>	Couturier, entered in 1783; gilder		Fritsch, painter, figures and children, 1763-1765
<i>ch</i>	Chabry (son), entered in 1763; miniatures and pastoral subjects, 1749		Dieu, gilder and painter, 1780-1790, Chinese figures and detached flowers	<i>fz</i>	Fumez, detached bouquets, 1777-1801

ROYAL SÈVRES

61

	Chanon (Mdme), <i>née</i> Julie Durosey, painter of flowers before 1800		Dodin, b. 1734, painter, gilder, and burnisher, 1754-1803		Gauthier, landscapes, and animals, 1767-1791
	Chapuis (the elder), entered in 1756; painter of landscapes and animals		Drand, working in 1761 in the Chantilly factory; painter and gilder		Genest, b. 1731, figures, <i>genre</i> subjects, 1752, in 1780 chief of the painters, gilders, and burnishers
	Genin, b. 1740, flowers, garlands, borders, etc.; entered in 1756, left in 1758		Joyau, detached bouquets, before 1800		Maqueret (Mdme), <i>née</i> Rachel Bouillat, painter of flowers before 1800
	Gérard (Claude- Charles) b. 1757, pas- toral subjects, mini- atures; entered 1771 as pupil painter, be- came head of paint- ers, gilders, and burnishers; pen- sioned 1825, d. 1826		Jubin, gilder, before 1800		Massy, flowers, garlands, etc., 1779-1806
	Gèrad (Mdme), <i>née</i> Vautrim, painter of flowers; working about 1792		La Roche, entered 1758; flowers, garlands, emblems before 1800		Mérault (the elder), entered at 19 in 1754; painter of pictures and flowers
	Girar, arabesques, Chinese figures, etc.; entered 1771 and in 1780-1793		Le Bel (the elder), figures and flowers, before 1800		Mérault (junior), bouquets, garlands, 1786-1789
	Gomery (Edme), b. 1736, flowers and birds; working in 1756		Le Bel (the younger), entered in 1765; painter of flowers, gilder		Micaud, entered 1757; flowers, bouquets, panels, 1758-1780
	Gremont, painter of garlands and bouquets, 1769-1781		Léandre, pastoral subjects, miniatures; left 1785		Michel, detached bouquets, before 1800
	Grlson, gilder; entered in 1749		Lecot, entered 1763; Chinese subjects, working in 1793		Moiror, detached bouquets, 1790-1791

	Henrion, flowers, garlands; entered 1768		Ledoux (Jean Pierre), b. 1735, landscapes, birds, 1758; in 1774 mentioned as manufacturer at Chantilly		Mongenot, b. 1724, flowers, detached bouquets, 1754
	Héricourt, b. 1740, garlands, detached bouquets, before 1800		Le Guay (Etienne Henri, called le père), entered in 1749 as painter in blue at Vincennes, and gilder in 1751; died before 1800		Morin, b. 1733, marine and military subjects, 1754, still working 1780
	Hilken, figures, pastoral subjects, before 1800		Leguay (Pierre Andre), b. 1743, entered 1772, d. 1819; painter of miniatures, children, Chinese subjects		Mutel, b. 1736, landscapes, 1754
	Houry, flowers, etc., 1747-1755		Levé (Sen.), b. 1731, entered 1754; flowers, birds, arabesques, 1754		Miquet, entered 1764; detached bouquets
	Humy, flowers, detached bouquets, 1791-1799		Levé (Felix), flowers, Chinese subjects, before 1800		Noel (Guillaume), b. 1735, entered 1755, working after 1793; flowers and ornaments
	Nouailhier (M ^{me}), née S. Durosey, flowers, detached bouquets in 1780		Prévost, b. 1735, entered 1754, working till 1793; painter of flowers and gilder		Tandart (Charles, junior), b. 1736, entered 1755; painter of flowers
	Parpette (Philippe), b. 1738, entered 1755; painter of flowers and gilder; consulting artist in 1793		Raux, painter of detached bouquets before 1800		Tandi (Claude Antoine) b. 1733, entered 1757, d. 1795; painter of flowers and garlands
	Parpette (M ^{lle} L.), entered 1794, painter of flowers before 1800		Rocher (Alexandre), b. 1729, miniatures, figures, 1758		Théodore, gilder before 1800
	Pajou, b. 1722, entered 1750; painter of pictures, etc.		Rosset, b. 1735, entered 1753, working till 1793; painter of flowers, landscapes, and animals		Thévenet (senior), b. 1708, painted principally flowers modelled by Gravant, cartouches, and groups, in 1745
	Petit (Nicolas, senior), b. 1724, painter of flowers in 1756		Rousel, detached bouquets, 1842-1872		Thévenet (junior), b. 1737, entered 1752; painter of flowers, ornaments, and friezes

	Pfeiffer, working in 1793, detached bouquets before 1800		Schradre, working about 1783 onwards; painter of birds and landscapes		Vaude, b. 1727, gilder in 1755, and chief burnisher
	Pierre (the elder), painter of detached bouquets, flowers before 1800		Sinsson (père Jacques Nicolas), 2nd generation, b. 1781, entered 1795, returned 1845 painter of flowers		Vavasseur (or Vasseur), b. 1731, entered 1753; painter of flowers
	Pierre (Jean Jacques, the younger), entered 1763; painter of flowers		Sioux (the elder), b. 1716, entered 1752; painter of detached bouquets and garlands till 1792		Vieillard, b. 1718, entered 1752; painter of attributes and ornaments
	Philippine (the elder), entered 1779, working in 1823; painting and pastoral subjects of children		Sioux (the younger), b. 1718, entered 1752; flowers and garlands		Vincent (senior), b. 1730, entered 1752, continued under the Directoire and Empire period, gilder till 1791
	Pithou (the elder), entered 1722; painter of portraits and historical subjects; became consulting artist		Tabary, b. 1711, entered in 1754; painter of birds		Xrowet, b. 1736, entered 1750; painter of landscapes, arabesques, and flowers
	Pouillot, entered 1777; flowers, detached bouquets		Tailandier, b. 1737, entered 1752, d. 1790; painter of bouquets and garlands		Yvernel, b. 1713, entered 1750; painter of birds, landscapes, etc.

CHRONOLOGICAL LETTERS

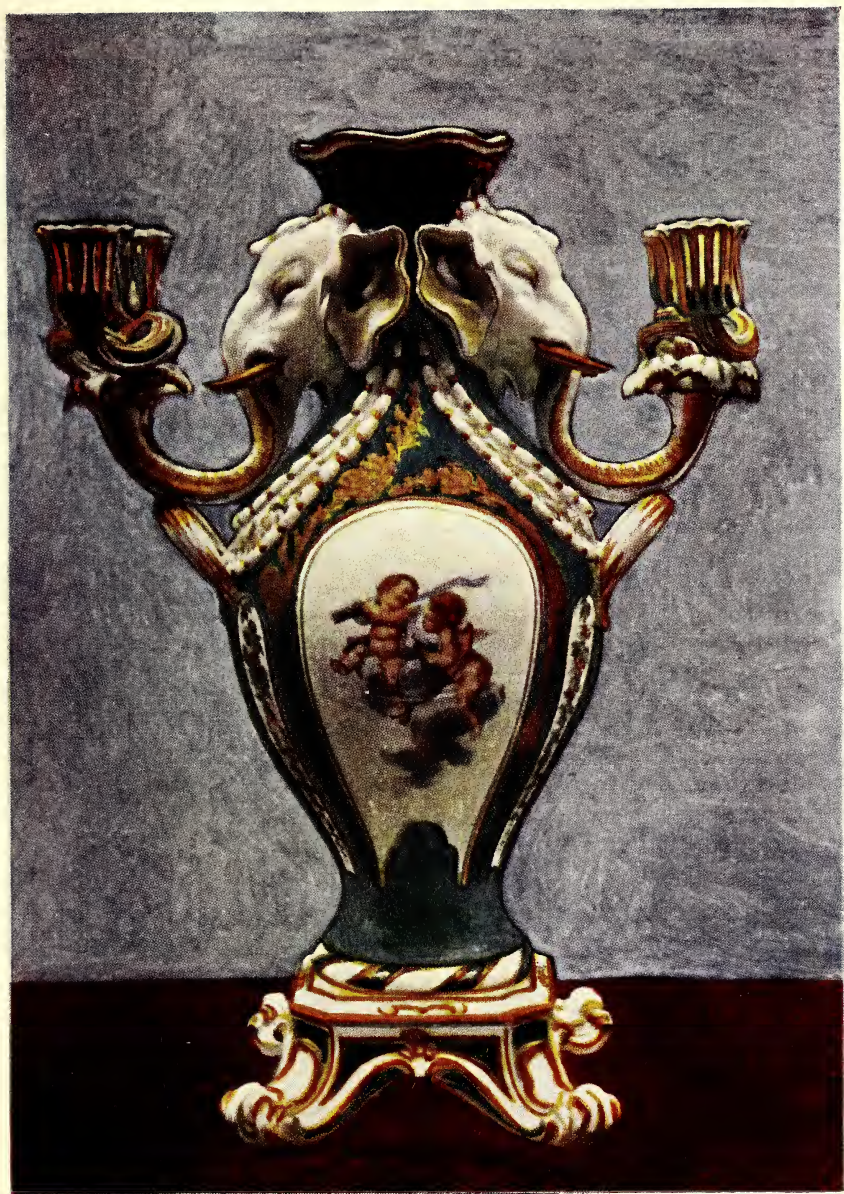
VINCENNES	..	A	..	1753	SÈVRES	..	..	U	..	1773
"	..	B	..	1754	"	..	..	V	..	1774
"	..	C	..	1755	"	..	..	X	..	1775
SÈVRES	..	D	..	1756	"	..	..	Y	..	1776
"	..	E	..	1757	"	..	..	Z	..	1777
"	..	F	..	1758	"	..	..	AA	..	1778
"	..	G	..	1759	"	..	..	BB	..	1779
"	..	H	..	1760	"	..	..	CC	..	1780
"	..	I	..	1761	"	..	..	DD	..	1781
"	..	J	..	1762	"	..	..	EE	..	1782
"	..	K	..	1763	"	..	..	FF	..	1783
"	..	L	..	1764	"	..	..	GG	..	1784
"	..	M	..	1765	"	..	..	HH	..	1785
"	..	N	..	1766	"	..	..	II	..	1786
"	..	O	..	1767	"	..	..	JJ	..	1787
"	..	P	..	1768	"	..	..	KK	..	1788
"	..	Q	..	1769	"	..	..	LL	..	1789
"	..	R	..	1770	"	..	..	MM	..	1790
"	..	S	..	1771	"	..	..	NN	..	1791
"	..	T	..	1772	"	..	..	OO	..	1792

The marks, monograms and names of various painters, decorators and gilders, from 1750 to 1904—a valuable record to the collection—precede on pages 59, 60, 61, 62, 63.

With these particulars before us, we can face the many clever imitators of Sèvres who use these marks and dates, always supposing that we have some knowledge of the material and styles of decoration and vogue in the different periods of Sèvres. Without such knowledge the marks are of little use, unless one happens to know the personal history and pedigree, as it were, of the piece and can approach the matter with simple faith in its originality. But, notwithstanding the many advantages of the Sèvres system of marking, it will be found that many important pieces are without either dated letter or the sign of the decorator. It is thought that these objects were intended as royal gifts and the usual marks considered unnecessary; such an example, it was supposed, at once becoming historic by reason of the importance of the donor.

PLATE XI.—CANDELABRUM OF FOUR LIGHTS

This curious design shows the elephants' heads very elaborately moulded in high relief in a totally different vein of art from the vase or main part, which forms the lower section of the piece. This is in pale blue-green with reserves in white. On these reserves or cartels are charming paintings in the manner of Boucher from the brush of Dodin. The date letter is 1756. It is said that candelabra of the same design, but coloured with the *rose Pompadour*—here called *rose Du Barry*, although made many years before the reign of that lady—are in the collection of Mr. Alfred de Rothschild, who possesses many interesting examples of the elaborate productions of Sèvres.



CHAPTER VI

THE enormous vases and ornaments made for kings and princes will always remain monuments of ceramic skill, and symbols of the great and gorgeous days of the Louis who sometimes supposed that he was Well-Beloved.

But whether, decoratively speaking, what appears now to be considered the finest French porcelain deserves to be collected at all is another question. I think its qualities immensely overrated. Take, for example, a typical Jardinière, No. 118, in the XIIth Gallery at the Wallace Collection. It is of the *pâte tendre*, of about 1758-59; the ground is *rose Pompadour*, with bands of *vert foncé*; the groups of flowers are by Bertrand. It is Sèvres at its best period, painted by a famous artist and purchased by a great connoisseur. The wealth of kings and the knowledge of the world had been brought to its production, and yet its value as a thing of beauty is less than the meanest

work that the humblest potter of the Celestial Empire has ever produced. Or turn to the well-known Sèvres Inkstand, No. 134, in the same gallery at Hertford House. This may be supposed to be the fine flower of the manufactory, for it was specially made for Louis XV. to present to the Dauphine Marie-Antoinette. It bears the King's portrait and the monogram of the Princess; it is decorated by Falot.

OVER DECORATION

The result is absolutely contemptible and vulgar. In perhaps a lesser degree, this is true of the majority of pieces of the grand period of French porcelain. The grace of the figures, especially in "biscuit," is, as I have said, another and better affair.

But my view is far from being the orthodox one. In Mr. Burton's edition of M. Auscher's "History," the author speaks of this vast inkstand as of a piece of work of the utmost elegance and refinement, and mentions it especially as conveying a wonderful idea of the inventive genius of the decorators of Sèvres. Here, I believe, the technical ability displayed in this and other elaborate pieces blinds the accom-

PLATE XII.—JARDINIÈRE WITH CUPID MUSICIANS

This style of flower-holder was extremely popular in the eighteenth century, when Sèvres produced many varieties of the piece. This particular example has a rich ground of the pinkish colour justly known in France as *rose Pompadour*, but here, at the Wallace Gallery and elsewhere, invariably called *rose Du Barry*. It is certain that this particular *rose* graced the style of the earlier mistress of the king, but the Du Barry is supposed to have appreciated the tint and included it in her lavish orders from the factory. The cupids painted in pink on white ground, the fine gold designs, and the rich *rose Pompadour*, make a delightful *ensemble*.



plished ceramicist to the inæsthetic quality of the ornamentation. It may, however, be safe to say that in no other period have any similar *tours de force* been executed in china-ware, but that does not prevent one seeing that their elaborate efforts are over-done and obvious.

DELICACY AS WELL AS THE FLAMBOYANT

When one includes Vincennes within the title of Sèvres, the field is so wide that all sorts and conditions of work lie before you. Thus in a collection such as that at the factory museum, or say in various galleries at South Kensington or at the Wallace, side by side with pieces the over ornamentation of which fails to delight the person of taste, are to be found examples whose beauty and exquisite finish, delicate colouring, and subtle grace utterly gain one's praises. In conjunction with over elaboration came simplicity; close by the somewhat crude application of gilt and body colour are the sophisticated skill and the cultivated delicacy of the school of Boucher and Vanloo and their accomplished followers. These gifted artists served that "crowned Caprice"

who then ruled the arts so gaily, that charming—

“Laughing Dame, who sailed a laughing cargo
Of flippant loves alone the *Fleuve du Tendre*;
Whose greatest grace was *jupes à la Carmargo*,
Whose gentlest merit *gentiment se rendre*;
Queen of the rouge-cheeked Hours, whose footsteps fell
To Rameau’s notes, in dances by Gardel.”

It is the spirit of this period and these people that the early Sèvres crystallises with such wonderful and convincing effect.

Although the development of the technical qualities of these French productions is of the greatest interest, it is rather the decoration which attracts the wide appreciation of collectors. The various classes of this work are very many, but with the hard-paste examples the *motif* is, perhaps too often, that of the miniature painter rather than the decorator. But with so many hundreds of accomplished artists, new ideas frequently arose. Among these may be mentioned the “Jewel” work, or again, in a totally different manner, the little blue corn-flower that Marie Antoinette delighted to honour.

One may now study examples in English museums or those of Sèvres, the Louvre, the

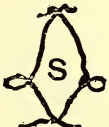
PLATE XIII.—THE CROWNED CLOCK

One of the elaborate but not essentially beautiful examples probably made for Royal use in the transition period between two styles of Louis Quinze and Louis Seize. The body of the vase is of apple-green ornamented with swags and wreaths of oak leaves and acorns tied with white and gold ribbons. The Royal crown of France was frequently used as part of the ornament of a piece when it was manufactured for Court service. In this case the crown forms the cover of the clock-vase. The small clock is by Lepante. On the back is a finely executed medallion portrait of Louis Quinze in the *biscuit de Sèvres* in which so many charming statuettes were made.





Cluny, and Versailles, Dresden, and elsewhere, perfectly at ease. Thus the student, with the knowledge of marks and dates, and the experience which the actual sight and, if possible, touch of the best examples will give, may come forth fully armed against the sea of frauds and troubles which the collector of fine French porcelain must encounter. The skilful attempts which the forgers have made upon the pocket of the would-be connoisseur are told in many chapters on the subject. These are, I fancy, the common experience of every collector. Not long since a friend brought me two pretty little cups and saucers marked very clearly in over

glaze blue  and with the decorator's

mark, . . . A moment's reference to the lists of date letters and painters' marks will show that the "S" is for the year 1771, and the . . . the mark of Charles Tandart, who entered the studios in 1755. He no doubt was decorating in 1771, but these little cups have elaborately painted scenes, with figures somewhat in the

Boucher manner, while Tandart was strictly a painter of flowers. Such mistakes frequently dog the undertakings of the producers of pseudo-Sèvres, and can be easily disposed of. But there are many more difficult affairs. In the early days of Sèvres the monopoly which the King gave to his works, and the immense prices received for its productions, caused other potters to produce pieces that purported to be Sèvres porcelain, and have often passed as such. Vast quantities, too, of ware have been made at Sèvres, and decorated and altered elsewhere—simple pieces being made elaborate, the original beauty being taken off by subtle means, and the violent and complicated designs, which produce higher prices, superimposed. Thus, in regard to collecting old Sèvres, the difficulties are many. But these only heighten the pleasures of the chase to those who are keen upon the *flair*. As one knows, the pieces were made chiefly for the rich, and have of late been garnered with the greatest care into the big collections. And yet one day a collector, who has some good pieces, found an inkstand of an interesting date in an odd shop in Drury Lane

PLATE XIV.—TWO ÉCUELLES AND VASE

Examples of the graceful and simple work of the late 'sixties of the eighteenth century, when the artistry of the potters and decorators was applied to the delicate services of the table. The second écuelle

is lacking a stand, the date mark is



but the decorator's

sign is not clear.



and bought it for thirty shillings, a price the dealer evidently considered a high one. But if such chances are rare, a worse evil than the lack of game is, perhaps, the false scent with which the country-side is troubled. The large prices always obtained for Sèvres have stimulated the counterfeiter to remarkable efforts. During the last hundred years, at least, he has been busy. The results are said to be observable in every large collection, but often they are so clever that, from the point of appearance, there is not much to choose between the real and the false or made-up pieces. I have heard the science of this misleading and regrettable art called "fakology,"—a study which is somewhat important in regard to all antiques, but especially perhaps as regards Sèvres porcelain. The pieces of Mennecy-Villeroy, Bourg-la-Reine, Tournay, and Saint-Amand are to be found with Sèvres marks applied in various ways. But the soft paste of the last days of Vincennes, and the first part of Sèvres, which was at once thin in body, white, transparent, with a brilliant glaze, was not reproduced by those examples which were designed, or were afterwards made, to imitate

it. In the book of M. Auscher, to which I have often referred, there is a note which collectors will appreciate. "It should never be forgotten," he says, "that in the old Sèvres soft-paste time the colour was either painted 'impasto' or floated on in the style of water colour, in a manner entirely distinct from the miniature-like processes of stippled painting, with reserved high lights which was especially used in painting on hard-paste porcelain. The gilding also of the soft-paste porcelain pieces, executed with pure leaf-gold, ground up in honey, so that the metal stands up thickly upon the piece, is absolutely distinctive." Another point this authority mentions is useful. Any piece decorated with the characteristic yellowish-green colour of oxide of chromium, or any colour containing a chromium basis, must be later than 1801, when this mineral was first introduced at Sèvres.

PLATE XV.—(1) CUP, COVER, AND SAUCER

A charming type of piece in the popular *rose Pompadour* colour with heavy gilt ornament in the *rocaille* style. Birds and trees from the hand of one of the many masters in this class of exotic drawing are seen in the reserves or cartels. The date is probably about 1757, when such examples of Sèvres were much in vogue at Court.

(2) TWO-HANDLED BOWL, COVER, AND PLATE

The body of this delicate example, made in various forms in the early days of Sèvres, is of the *rose Pompadour* enriched with gilded scrolls in the *rocaille* style. The exquisitely painted birds and landscapes in the white reserves are from the brush of the famous decorator Aloncle. The piece was produced in 1759 and is highly typical of its period.



CHAPTER VII

FEW china-ware factories have been so fortunate in their patrons as that of Sèvres, although all European efforts in regard to porcelain, with the exception of those of England, were more or less State-supported. Apart from the influence of the King of Saxony, many German states possessed a factory, and princes, who took Versailles as their model, and great ladies of the reigning houses, vied with each other in patronising porcelain during the eighteenth century. But just as France was the ruler of Europe at that time, so were her ceramics the most important and the most bought throughout the Western world. It is said examples even travelled into the far East, and that Oriental princes received many specimens of this ware.

VARIOUS FACTORS OF SUCCESS

The interest of Louis XV., and later of Marie Antoinette, both as Dauphine and Queen, the

lavishness and cleverness of the Pompadour, and the extravagance of the Du Barry, helped the porcelains immensely. The lack of silver on the tables of the great families, owing to continuous wars, made the porcelains especially welcome, and the beauty and grace of their production fitted well with the then current taste in art—a taste which asked only for the delicate and artificial, and barred all approaches to nature.

CHASED AND GILDED MOUNTS

One very important factor in the ornamentation of Royal Sèvres is to be found in the very frequent use of ormolu mounts. In many cases the original design included this applied work, and then the result was often of considerable advantage to the *ensemble*. Incidentally it may be owned that the combination of metal work with porcelain, or of the inlay of woodwork with china-ware, and other such arbitrary mating of incongruous materials, is æsthetically of no value. Yet there are examples in which the eighteenth-century metal work is made to lend an added grace to the porcelain of Sèvres. For

example, in the King's collection there is a vase of the so-called Marie Antoinette style, date letter of 1782, with finely-chased handles formed by goats resting on grotesque masks, which gains greatly in beauty by this addition. But no doubt the vase, one of a pair, was made with the intention that Pierre Gouthière, the famous worker in bronze, should supply this ornament. Another pair of vases which has been mentioned in this connection, was, it is thought, decorated with mounts at the time when they formed part of the Regent's collection at the Brighton Pavilion. This would probably be very early in the nineteenth century, when the delicate and spirited *Chinoiserie*s of the French eighteenth century were being once more reproduced in the curious Pavilion of George, afterwards the Fourth. These vases, as Mr. Laking says, are helped by the English ormolu mounts; but as a rule, in the Royal collection and elsewhere, the metal ornaments added to porcelains during the nineteenth century in England, are destructive of the original beauty of the piece—clumsy, poor in design, and badly carried out. But if the use of bronze

and gilded mounts sometimes detracts from rather than adds to the grace of the porcelain, how much more is this true of its use in furniture, and yet its employment in this connection vastly increased the demand for Sèvres plaques and panels. Of course the tables and gay little reading-desks, the music stands and cabinets, which are decorated in this way remain to a certain extent artificially charming, as all this work of the great French period is; but, viewed on the broad lines of beauty, these efforts to over-lay and jewel, as it were, the furniture with Sèvres appear very weak and small. There is no doubt too much attempted in these combinations of all the crafts of the cabinet-maker, the metal-chaser, and polisher, the gilder, the painter in miniature, and the potter. The result, although admired and collected by some of the most famous of the connoisseurs since such things were produced, is really unworthy of the labour and cost expended upon construction and decoration. To go no farther a-field, some examples in the remarkable "Jones" Collection at South Kensington will be found, on consideration, to substantiate this view.

PLATE XVI.—THREE APPLE-GREEN VASES WITH ORMOLU

The first of these, with tall cylindrical neck, is decorated with an elaborate painting showing Jupiter and Antiope on one side and a trophy of appropriate emblems on the other. As with the other vase of the pair, No. 3, the green ground is enriched with a design of feathers and foliage in flat gilding. No. 3 shows a cartel with the painting of the birth of Venus and another with emblems. The larger vase in the middle is decorated with a design in gold of oak leaves and acorns, and painted in cartels. One shows Venus and a Marine Deity, the other, here given, displays a trophy of emblems connected with the sea and the "Golden Lady." The handles of this piece are formed by two heads of Minerva moulded in white and touched with gold.



SOME AUTHORITIES

To those who would follow the full and interesting subject of Sèvres porcelain further than this short monograph can do, I would suggest the study of the following works published in England, to which I am, and all writers of to-day must be, more or less indebted:—"The Soft Porcelain of Sèvres," by Mr. Edouard Garnier, who, with Mr. Gasnault, has also prepared the South Kensington handbook on "French Pottery and Porcelain," an extremely useful work now out of print. Mr. Burton's volume on "Porcelain," and also his edition of M. Auscher's "History and Description of French Porcelain," both of which are full of information at first hand; Mr. Wylde's work on "Continental China" has some excellent chapters on the subject, as has also the clear and concise volume of Mr. R. L. Hobson's "Porcelains of all Countries."

Among other books devoted to Sèvres, that of Mr. Guy Laking on the English Royal Collections at Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace may be considered of great importance.

Owing to the illustrations being taken from the well-known objects themselves, and the chronological arrangement of the series of soft-paste pieces, a reference to his work is highly informing and interesting.

Then there is Mr. Frantz's "French Pottery and Porcelain," although his book is of course more fully devoted to early pottery than the soft and hard pastes of Vincennes and Sèvres. The late Sir Wollaston Franks had some excellent notes on the subject in the catalogue of his own "Collection of Continental Porcelain," and the matter is touched on in most of the recent works dealing with the art of collecting.





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